

### REMARKS

Claims 1-30 and 35-46 are currently pending, of which claims 1, 16, 35, 36, 39, 40, 43, and 46 are independent. Claims 1 and 16 have been amended. Claims 31-34 have been canceled. Claims 40-46 have been added. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration of the action mailed March 20, 2006, is requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

### **35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections**

Claims 1, 9-12, 14, 16, 24-27, 29 and 39 were rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,425,012 ("Trovato") in view of U.S. Patent 6,651,086 ("Manber") and U.S. Patent 6,750,881 ("Appleman").

Trovato places users in a common network based merely on the time the users access the network or on common characteristics between the users (e.g., party affiliation, geographic location, interests). In Manber, users select the chat room they wish to enter based on the topic being discussed in the particular chat room. Nothing in Trovato or Manber provides any disclosure of "determining whether an interactive relationship exists between a first user ... and a second user ..., wherein an interactive relationship is determined to exist if the first user and the second user have had an online interaction with each other prior to the first user entering the first forum" as recited in claim 1. The examiner relies on Appleman for this feature.

Appleman discloses a system that tracks, for each user, the logon status of selected co-users of the system. (Abstract) The Appleman system presents a Buddy List window to a user that includes a LOCATE button for determining which chat room a co-user is in at a particular moment. (col. 3, lines 37-40). Although Appleman is silent about what follows after the user is informed of the chat room in which the co-user is located, the applicant assumes for the sake of argument only that the system provides the user with an option to join the co-user in the chat room. Even so, nothing in Appleman provides any disclosure of "placing the first user ... in a clone of the first forum based on the relationship *even if the clone in which the first user is placed would otherwise be deemed full,*" as recited in amended claim 1.

For at least these reasons, claim 1 and its dependents are allowable over Trovato, Manber and Appleman.

The foregoing remarks also apply to independent claims 16 and 39, which have corresponding limitations, and the claims that depend, directly and indirectly, from claims 16 and 39.

Claims 2-8, 17-23, and 37-38 were rejected as being unpatentable over Trovato in view of Manber, and in further view of U.S. Patent 6,336,133 ("Morris").

Claims 15 and 30 were rejected as being unpatentable over Trovato and Manber, and further in view of U.S. Patent 5,888,731 ("Liles").

Claims 35 and 36 were rejected as being unpatentable over Trovato in view of Liles and Morris.

The dependent claims are allowable for at least the reasons that apply to the independent claims from which they depend.

#### **Allowable Subject Matter**

The applicant acknowledges the examiner's indication that claims 12, 13, 27, and 28 contain allowable subject matter.

The applicant also acknowledges the examiner's suggestion to amend the independent claims to "further incorporate limitations that clearly indicate reserving extra capacity for instances of forums, so that "special" users may be placed in an instance of a forum, even if the instance would otherwise be deemed full." (page 29 of present action).

#### **New Claims**

Independent claim 40 recites a method that includes "creating one or more clones of a forum for user interaction, wherein each clone is an instance of the forum; identifying a first user entering the forum as having a special designation; selecting a clone of the forum in which the first user is to be placed; if the selected clone is full, determining whether the selected clone has extra capacity reserved for use by users having a special designation, and if so, placing the first user entering the forum in the selected clone."

The applicant submits that none of the cited references disclose or suggest the features of independent claim 40. Independent claims 43 and 46 have corresponding limitations.

### Conclusion

The applicant respectfully requests that all pending claims be allowed.

By responding in the foregoing remarks only to particular positions taken by the examiner, the applicant does not acquiesce with other positions that have not been explicitly addressed. In addition, the applicant's arguments for the patentability of a claim should not be understood as implying that no other reasons for the patentability of that claim exist.

Enclosed is a \$300.00 check for excess claim fees. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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